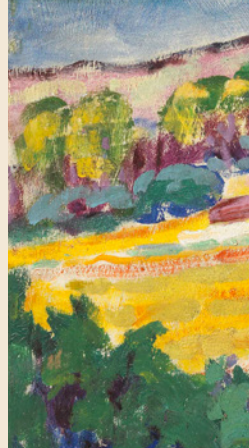


MARCH 25, 2022

RADICAL BEAUTY IMPRESSIONISM IN CANADA

Impressionism is one of the most famous and beloved styles of art. Yet until now our country's contribution to this international art movement has been little known. A new exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada will change this.

Helen McNicoll, *Sunny, September, 1913*, oil on canvas, 92 x 107.5 cm. Collection Pierre Lassonde.

In the early 1860s, a group of painters in France brought a new approach to art-making. Rather than depict true-to-life reflections of the world, they began to create "impressions" of how reality, light, and landscape appeared. Soon known as the Impressionists, these artists left their studios to paint scenes outdoors with thick and quick brushwork—and their style spread globally. [Canada and Impressionism: New Horizons](#), an enchanting new exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada (NGC) in Ottawa, reveals the profound influence of the European movement on this country's artists. Featuring more than 120 works by 36 painters, the show addresses how Canada contributed to the international phenomenon. Curated by Katerina Atanassova, the NGC's Senior Curator of Canadian Art, the touring exhibition had stops at the Kunsthalle München in Munich, the Fondation de l'Hermitage in Lausanne, and the Musée Fabre in Montpellier, before its long-awaited arrival in Ottawa. We hope you enjoy the following selection of works featured in the exhibition, which runs until the start of July.

Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

JOIN OUR ACI ZOOM LECTURE ON HELEN MCNICOLL AND IMPRESSIONISM Wednesday, March 30 at 5 PM, EST (Zoom)

"Helen McNicoll: Bringing Impressionism to Canada" will feature Samantha Burton, author of *Helen McNicoll: Life & Work*; Sasha Suda, Director and CEO, National Gallery of Canada; and Katerina Atanassova, Senior Curator of Canadian Art, National Gallery of Canada. Click [here](#) to attend the event.

AUTUMN IN FRANCE

by Emily Carr

Emily Carr, *Autumn in France, 1911*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

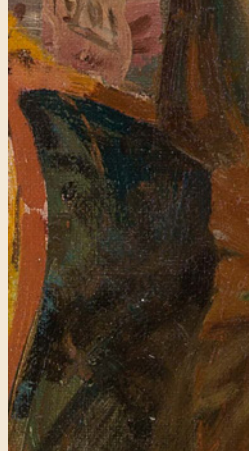
In 1910, long before Emily Carr (1871–1945) gained fame for her depictions of the British Columbia landscape, the West Coast artist embarked on a fifteen-month stay in France that sparked a radical change in her art. In contrast to her earlier naturalistic landscapes rendered in neutral tones, *Autumn in France*, 1911, painted in Brittany, is a dramatic image of the French landscape. Its bold brushstrokes and strong colour palette display the impact of Carr's European immersion, in particular the influence of Post-Impressionism and Fauvism.

Carr was introduced to these movements by her teacher in Paris, the British artist Harry Phelan Gibb (1870–1948), who greatly admired Paul Gauguin (1848–1903) and Henri Matisse (1869–1954). *Autumn in France* also reveals how Carr's explorations in the French countryside helped her discover ways to paint with unity and rhythm—something that would come to define her celebrated images of Canada upon her return home.

Read more in ACI's
[Emily Carr: Life & Work](#) by Lisa Baldissera

THE PINK DRESS

by Laura Muntz

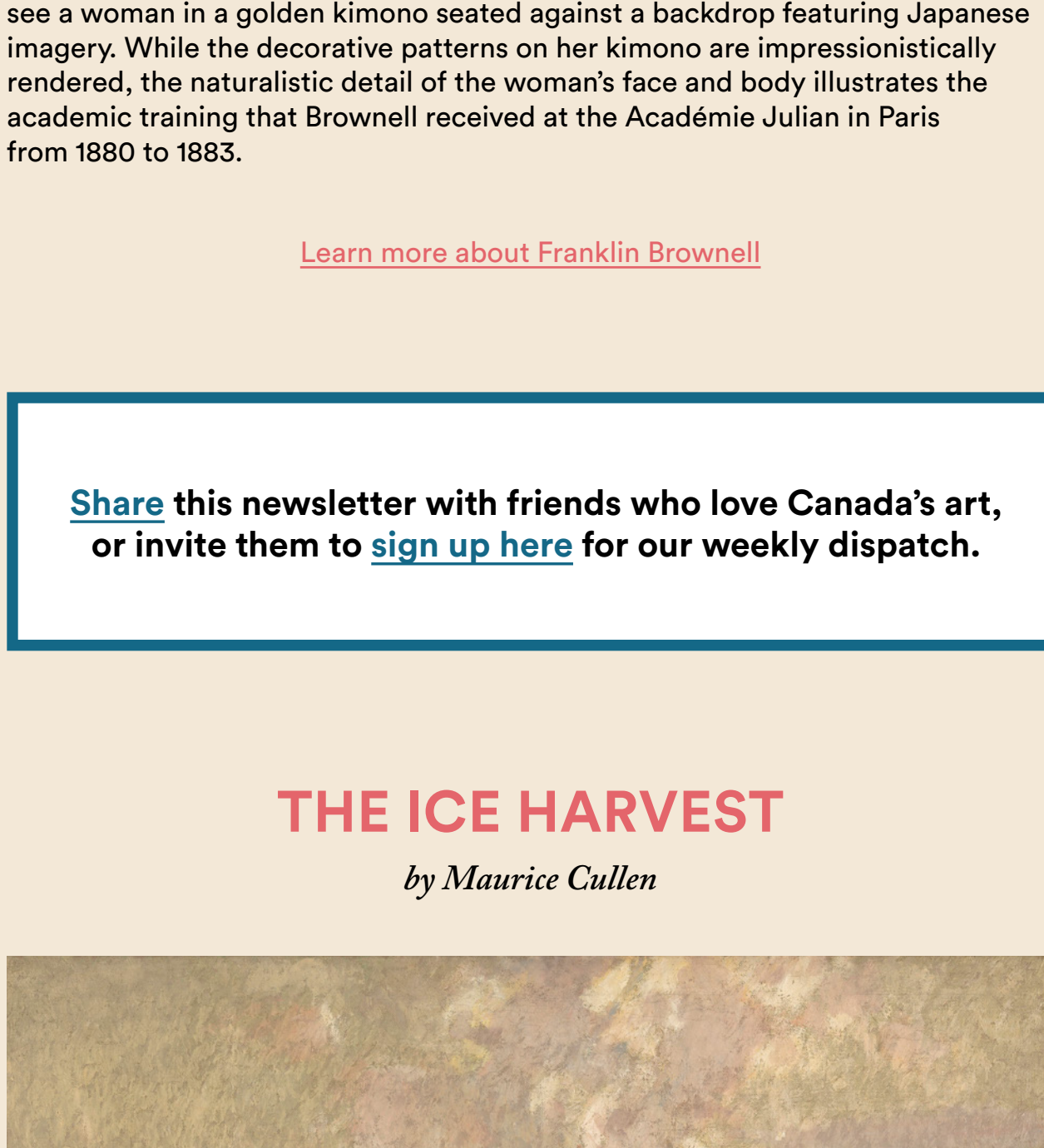
Laura Muntz, *The Pink Dress, 1897*, private collection, Toronto.

The confident, fresh brushstrokes and delicate pastel colours of *The Pink Dress*, 1897, epitomize the tenets of Impressionism, a style that Toronto painter Laura Muntz (1860–1930) embraced during her years in Paris. Living in France from 1891 to 1898, she took the opportunity to study the new movement firsthand, particularly the work of the American-born painter Mary Cassatt (1844–1926), who also moved to Europe for her art education. Both women were known for portraits inspired by family life—as Muntz once noted, "Painting and children...I don't know what I am foremost of." Garnering much critical acclaim, Muntz's work was exhibited in 1893 at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and in 1901 she was awarded a silver medal at the 1901 Pan-American Exposition. Her paintings appeared in numerous newspapers and magazines, including Canada's *Saturday Night* and England's *The Studio*. After her sister died in 1912, Muntz ceased painting for many years in order to devote herself to her family.

[Learn more about Laura Muntz](#)

LUXEMBOURG GARDENS, PARIS

by James Wilson Morrice

James Wilson Morrice, *Luxembourg Gardens, Paris, c.1905*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

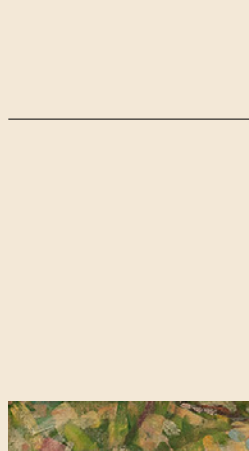
Arriving in Paris in the early 1890s, Montreal-born James Wilson Morrice (1865–1924) dabbled in Impressionism before developing a distinctive painting style that blended various artistic trends of the day. With *Luxembourg Gardens, Paris*, c.1905, the artist presents a scene of a solitary woman in red and white clothing strolling along a path lined with majestic autumn trees. The work is painted with loose brushwork and a rich colour palette. The gardens were one of the many places Morrice depicted that were near his home on the city's Left Bank, where the majority of Canadian artists lived. He made a habit of heading out daily and sketching what he saw on small wooden panels. Later, he used these sketches as a basis for larger paintings.

Living in Paris for nearly thirty-five years, Morrice captured everyday scenes of urban life that interested few other Canadian artists, making his images unique within this period of Canadian art.

[Learn more about James Wilson Morrice](#)

TEA TIME

by Franklin Brownell

Franklin Brownell, *Tea Time, 1901*, private collection.

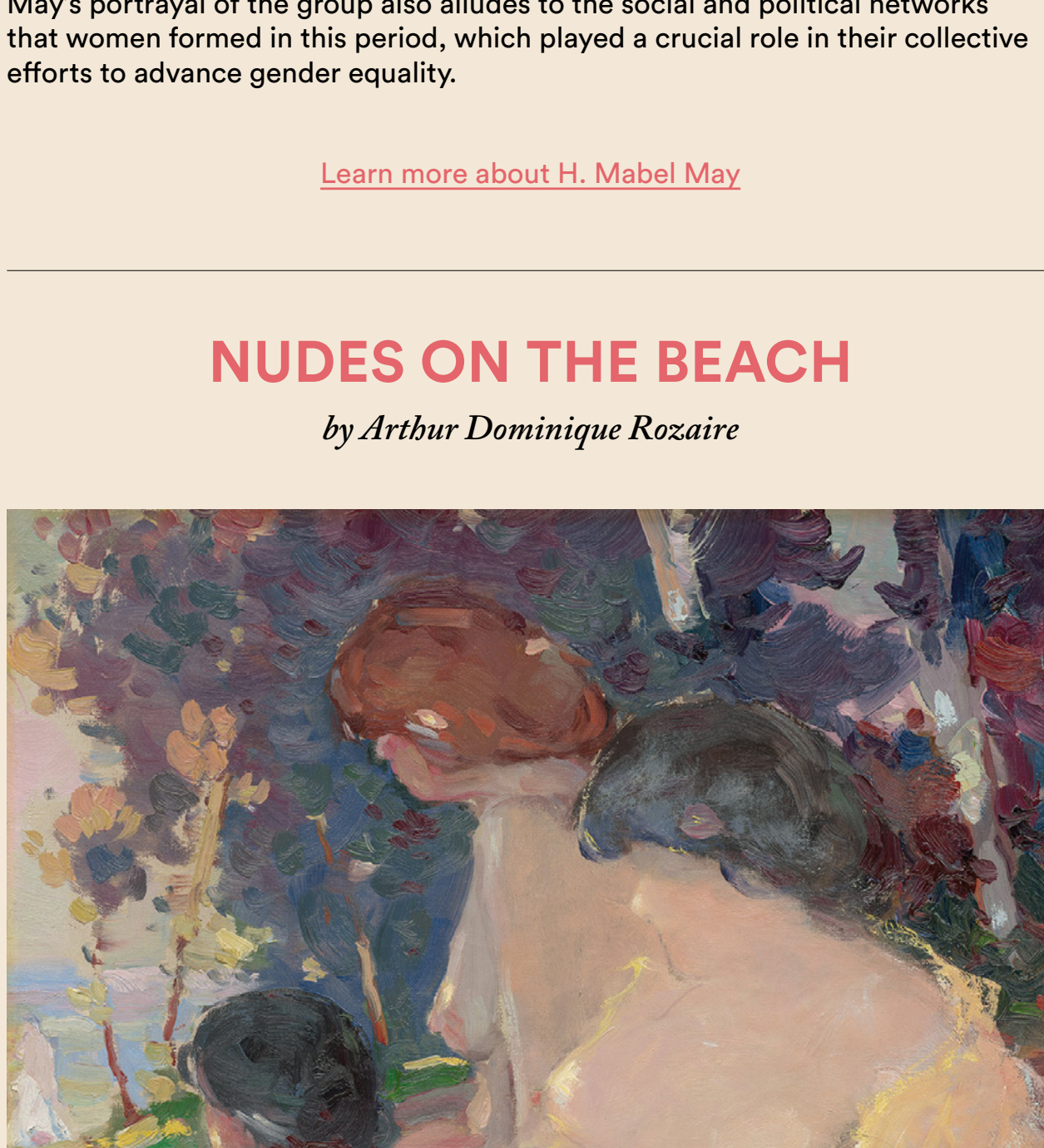
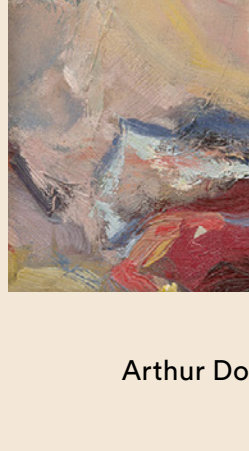
The Massachusetts-born Franklin Brownell (1857–1946) trained in Paris before he settled in Ottawa in 1887, where he became a prominent figure in the arts community, serving as headmaster of the Ottawa School of Art and an instructor at the Women's Art Association of Canada for several decades. With the opulent *Tea Time*, 1901, Brownell depicts a subject popular among Impressionist painters: middle-class women at leisure in their homes. Such scenes often incorporated elements of Japanese art and design, reflecting the rise of *japonisme* in France. Here we see a woman in a golden kimono seated against a backdrop featuring Japanese imagery. While the decorative patterns on her kimono are impressionistically rendered, the naturalistic detail of the woman's face and body illustrates the academic training that Brownell received at the Académie Julian in Paris from 1880 to 1883.

[Learn more about Franklin Brownell](#)

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THE ICE HARVEST

by Maurice Cullen

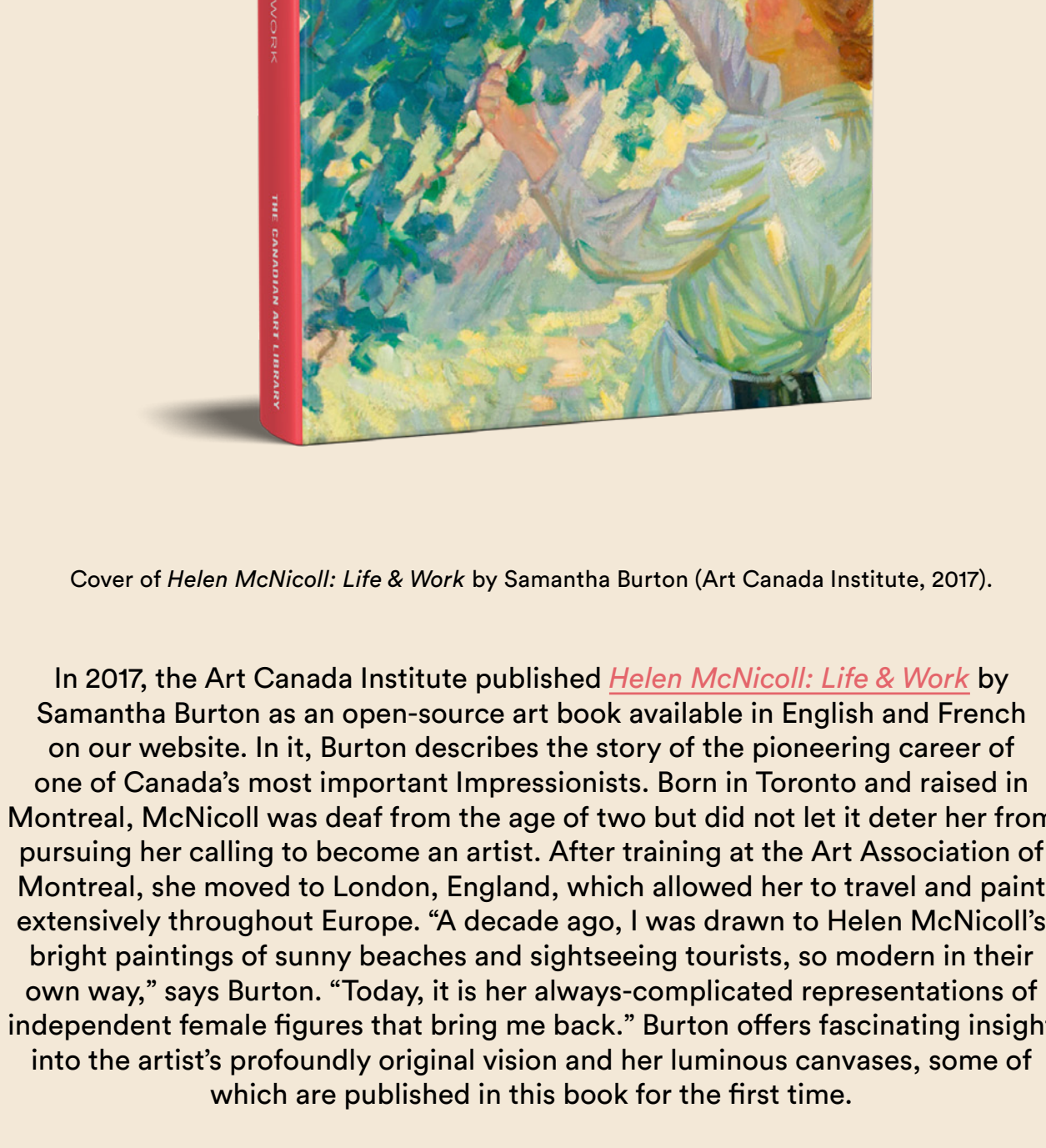
Maurice Cullen, *The Ice Harvest, c.1913*, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

With this exquisite composition, the Newfoundland-born painter Maurice Cullen (1866–1922) captures the unique quality of light on a winter's day, the paradoxical muted brightness that occurs when sunshine struggles through clouds but is magnified by the frozen white landscape. In 1889, Cullen left home to study painting in Paris, where he became so successful that in 1895 he became the first Canadian to be elected an associate of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, not long after the French Government purchased his painting *L'été*. That same year, Cullen moved to Montreal, where he was one of the first Canadian artists to render Quebec's landscapes and scenes using Impressionist techniques, with an emphasis on snowscapes. *The Ice Harvest*, c.1913, for example, combined experiments in brushwork and colour with a naturalist subject. As a critic noted in 1910, "Mr. Cullen knows well how to depict a Canadian winter atmosphere and the brilliant effects of snow and ice... We are glad to see Mr. Cullen painting his essentially Canadian scenes."

[Learn more about Maurice Cullen](#)

MARKETPLACE

by Helen McNicoll

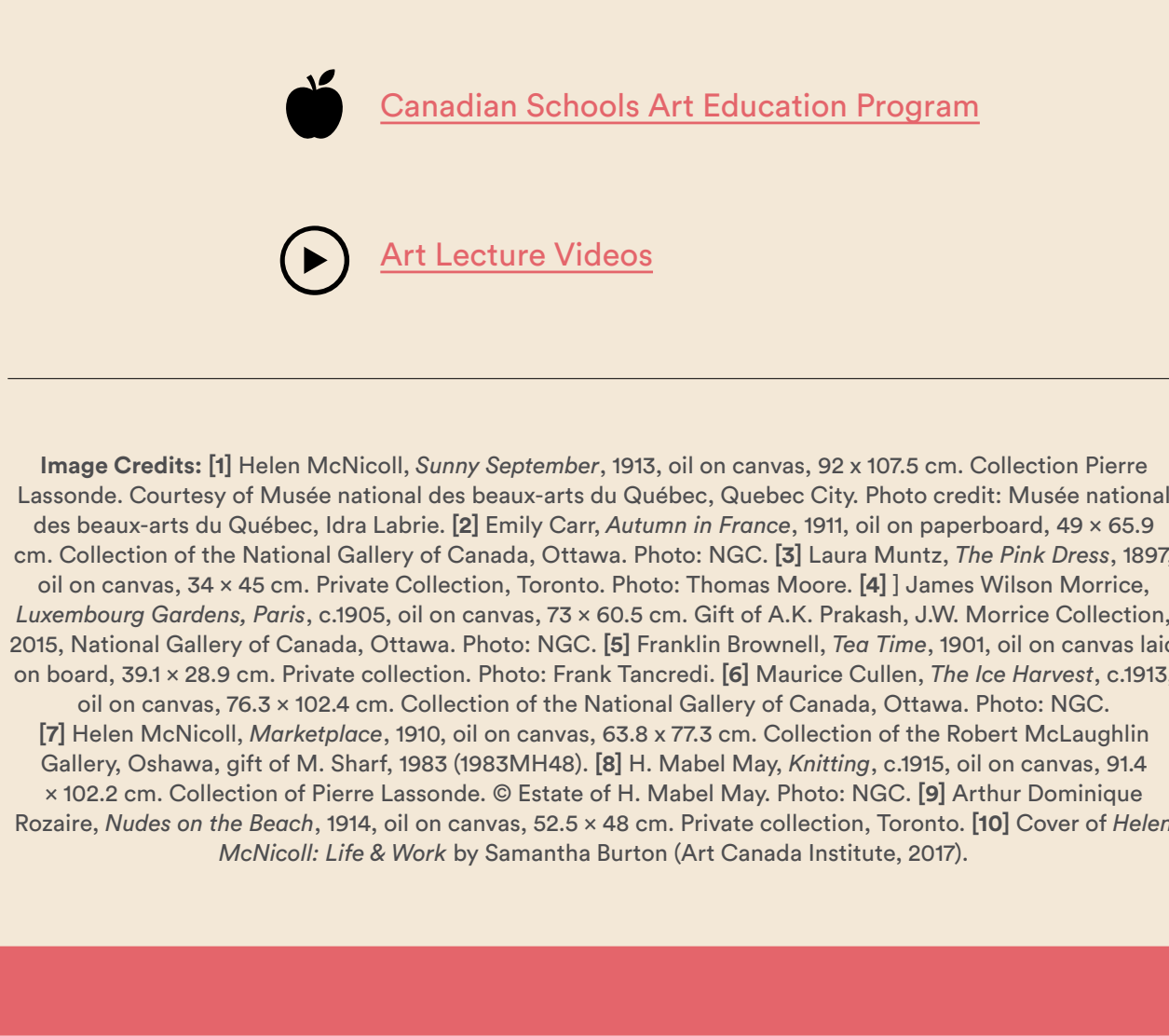
Helen McNicoll, *Marketplace, 1910*, Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa.

Unlike most Canadian Impressionists, Toronto-born, Montreal-raised artist Helen McNicoll (1879–1915) did not spend much time in Paris, opting instead for locations on the northern coast and the south of France. The loosely and colourfully painted *Marketplace*, 1910, vividly captures the sensation of a fall day at a rural market in Brittany. The scene is vibrant and jovial until one sees that in the background on the left, there are sellers displaying far fewer goods than those standing in stalls. A shop sign above them reads "Éclairage Chauffage," meaning "lighting, heating." Through this text, McNicoll emphasizes the heat of the sun and the class divide between the people seated at a distance and those situated in the bustle of the painting's central focus. The crowd in *Marketplace* makes this work different from the majority of McNicoll's compositions, which seldom have more than two figures and rarely depict urban subjects. More representative of her oeuvre is *Sunny September, 1913*, which is the banner image of *Canada and Impressionism: New Horizons*.

Read more in ACI's
[Helen McNicoll: Life & Work](#) by Samantha Burton

KNITTING

by H. Mabel May

H. Mabel May, *Knitting, c.1915*, Collection of Pierre Lassonde.

A founding member of the Montreal Beaver Hall Group (1920–23), H. Mabel May (1877–1971) enthusiastically embraced Impressionism during her travels abroad in France, England, and Holland in 1912 and 1913 with fellow artist Emily Coonan (1885–1971). Created two years after May's return from Europe, the sunny painting *Knitting*, c.1915, presents a group of young women gathered on a blanket outdoors, quietly knitting. The seated figures wear a fashionable white cotton dresses, "validating the modern women's sporty en plein air freedom, regardless of the corsetry that lay underneath," writes the art historian Anne Hudson. May's portrayal of the group also alludes to the social and political networks that women formed in this period, which played a crucial role in their collective efforts to advance gender equality.

[Learn more about H. Mabel May](#)

NUDES ON THE BEACH

by Arthur-Dominique Rozaire

Arthur-Dominique Rozaire, *Nudes on the Beach, 1914*, private collection, Toronto.

In *Nudes on the Beach*, 1914, Montreal-born artist Arthur-Dominique Rozaire (1878–1922) juxtaposes the carefully modelled women's bodies with a bold and colourful setting that is merely suggested through rich dabs of paint. The contrast reflects Rozaire's studies and the influence of his teachers: as a pupil at the Art Association of Montreal, he had extensive training in drawing and painting the human body, an academic tradition that originated in Europe during the Renaissance, but he was also a student of Maurice Cullen (see two entries above), who encouraged his students to experiment with Impressionism during class trips in the Quebec countryside. For Rozaire, the new style represented possibility. He ultimately became best known for his landscapes.

[Learn more about Arthur-Dominique Rozaire](#)

FOR MORE ABOUT HELEN MCNICOLL

Cover of *Helen McNicoll: Life & Work* by Samantha Burton (Art Canada Institute, 2017).

In 2017, the Art Canada Institute published *Helen McNicoll: Life & Work* by Samantha Burton as an open-source art book available in English and French on our website. In it, Burton describes the story of the pioneering career of one of Canada's most important Impressionists. Born in Toronto and raised in Montreal, McNicoll was deaf from the age of two but did not let it deter her from pursuing her calling to become an artist. After training at the Art Association of Montreal, she moved to London, England, which allowed her to travel and paint extensively throughout Europe. "A decade ago, I was drawn to Helen McNicoll's bright paintings of sunny beaches and sightseeing tourists, so modern in their own way," says Burton. "Today, it is her always-complicated representations of independent female figures that bring me back." Burton offers fascinating insight into the artist's profoundly original vision and her luminous canvases, some of which are published in this book for the first time.

[The book is also available for purchase in a print edition](#)

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